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PESTALOZZI SCENES AND MEMORIALS

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Switzerland, which has long been devoted to the honoring of men whose very existence is a matter of conjecture, has come of late to realize that it has the first right to honor one whose life and work have been of very real service to humanity everywhere; and memorials to Pestalozzi are beginning to take their place beside those erected long since to William Tell, Arnold von Winkelried, and other hazy heroes of the early days.

The most recent of these memorials is a statue in his native city of Zurich, the work of Hugo Siegwart; and it is, at the very least, most happily suggestive: A man in the garb of a century ago supports and leads along a poor boy, thin, barefooted, and ragged, who looks upon him appealingly, and in the wrinkled, homely face of the man one can see an answering look of sympathy and fostering care. On the granite base of the monument there is nothing but the name and date:

IOH. HEINR.
PESTALOZZI
1746-1827

I do not know whether it is by design or chance that the building behind this monument is a school; but the Pestalozzi represented is evidently not so much the successful teacher of the later years at Burgdorf and Yverdon as the friend of the poor and neglected at Stans and at Neuhof, in the neighborhood of Zurich itself.

Besides this statue, erected in 1899, there is also in Zurich a little room, down by the river, containing manuscripts and other mementos of him—a room, by the way, which should not be confused with the Pestalozzi room in the National Museum, which has nothing whatever to do with the great teacher.

It will be remembered that Pestalozzi married in Zurich and

took his wife to the oft-mentioned manor "Neuhof," which he had built, and where he hoped to make a model farm; and that his work as a teacher began when he took into it the most neglected children of the degraded peasants around him, and taught them to work and hope and respect themselves—until he himself was ruined; but he had begun to prove, first to Germany and then to the world, that education is for everyone; and, further, that the most effective education is something very different from mere book-learning.

Neuhof is rather hard to find. It lies three or four miles south of the railroad junction at Brugg, a mile from the lonely station at Birrfeld and half a mile south of the shabby old village of Birr where there is nothing but a few moss-grown roofs, an old hotel, a general store, and the desolate old graveyard where Pestalozzi is buried. This is a small, bare field with a row of weather-beaten headstones laid against the wall, a plain little church in one corner, a row of cypresses in memory of some French soldiers at the back, and in the other corner a combination school and fire-engine house, with a rather elaborate memorial to "Vater Pestalozzi" overlooking his grave. One would like to think that those whom the "father" called his children had put it there; but, alas, it was not erected by "thankful Aargau" until 1846, nineteen years after his death, and some sixty-five years after the last of the children (who *would* throw their flax out of the window until "Gertrude" weighed it) had been driven from Neuhof and the farm taken by the creditors; though for some reason or other the manor was left, and Pestalozzi and his family starved and shivered in it for eighteen years longer.

Thanks to a woman leading an ox-team, I had no difficulty in finding the house, and in that neighborhood, where paint is scarce and a single roof of moss-grown straw often covers dwelling and barn and stable with wood piled high around the house windows and the dung-heap in full view, it was certainly imposing with its red tiles and fresh, white paint and separation from the stables; and here, I suppose, one might shiver and starve with dignity.

Here, at any rate, half a mile from even the village church



MONUMENT TO PESTALOZZI—ZÜRICH



“NEUHOF”

and "The Bear," Pestalozzi wrote his *Evening Hours of a Hermit*, sprang into sudden fame with his simple peasant tale of *Leonard and Gertrude*, and pondered over the wretched condition of his neighbors, until at last he was called to Stans to work once more directly with unfortunate children. And hence to Neuhof, when the long life's work was nearly over, Pestalozzi returned and lived his last three years.

The conditions that produced such degradation among the children of Pestalozzi's neighbors have probably disappeared long ago; at least all the children I saw seemed clean and well cared for. But as I supped that evening at "The Bear," and an old man in unspeakable shirt-sleeves sat down near me for a bottle of beer, and talked unintelligibly to nobody in particular, then I did think of the shiftless mason in *Leonard and Gertrude*, who was always drinking and always in debt to the designing landlord, though, for all I know, my friend may have been the landlord himself. As for the landlady, she gave me butter for my bread when I asked for it, and my tall glass of milk, "fresh from the beast," was warm and dripping and covered with an inch of foam.

From Neuhof Pestalozzi's destiny took him to Stans. This is one of the places that Cook's coaches take tourists out from Lucerne to see, and is in many respects as romantic as Birr is commonplace. The lake, though near, is quite invisible, and the mountains all around, with their grassy slopes and darker pines and steep palisades and painted rocks, combine to make a scene of loveliness. To the south there is a little bit of sky between the mountains, and for four months in the winter the village gets from it each day its single hour of sunshine.

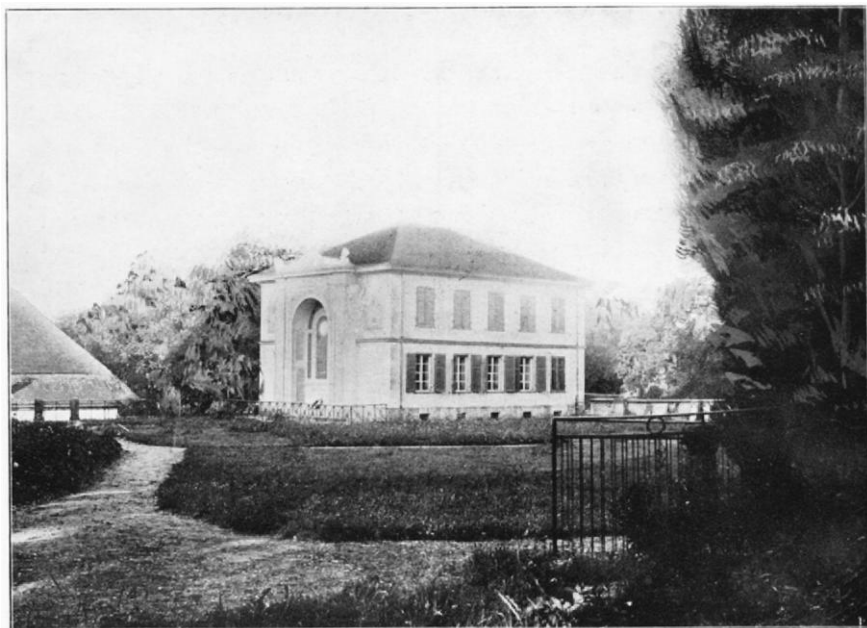
The village itself is also interesting, with its Winkelried memorial, the convent and the Capuchin monastery, the church with picturesque tower and single-fingered clock beneath the spire, the fountains on the square below, where wooden shoes clatter over the cobblestones, and on the outskirts, up the valley, a warm and friendly little cemetery like an Italian campo santo, with flowers and cloistered walls—very different from the cold churchyard at Birr.

Then too, the time of Pestalozzi's advent was far from prosaic. On the mortuary chapel beside the church is a tablet erected to the memory of the "honor-worthy priests and the virtuous fathers, mothers, sisters, and brothers, to the extent of 414, who perished for God and their native land in the harvest month of 1798," when the French army of enlightenment massacred the people for their stubborn resistance. The orphans left by this horrible tragedy had to be cared for, and so the government turned the sisters out of a part of the convent and sent Pestalozzi, a liberal and a heretic, to take care of the children. Here he shut himself up for four long months in a single room with first forty and then more of the poor wretches, loathsome with disease and vermin, and incited by their elders to hatred and suspicion; and here he nursed them, taught them, disciplined them, and loved them through the dark winter days, with results that astonished the world; until at last the convent was required for a military hospital, the children were dispersed, and Pestalozzi took to the mountains to recover his broken health.

The wing of the convent which Pestalozzi and the children occupied dates back to 1730 (the chapel is a hundred years older), but it was renovated in 1897, and is now occupied by a girls' boarding-school. In the renovation the room occupied by Pestalozzi and the children was destroyed.

In the town Pestalozzi is not altogether forgotten. "He is thought well of," said one of the inhabitants; "he did good work with the children." But in bronze or stone he has no memorial there. The fountains on the square are still presided over by Winkelried and St. John; the local dealer in picture postal-cards can give you the church or the Winkelried Memorial and the inclined roads up the Stanserhorn and the Rigi, but he has nothing to remind one especially of Pestalozzi; and even the picture of the *pensionat* Santa Clara, into which the convent is converted, happens to show as little as possible of Pestalozzi's wing.

To follow Pestalozzi's movements, we must go west some twenty miles from Lucerne and Stans to Burgdorf, in canton Bern, only a dozen miles northeast of the capital city. Burgdorf is a busy town of some eight thousand inhabitants, with arcades



MEMORIAL TO PESTALOZZI ON SCHOOLHOUSE AT BIRR. CYPRESSES TO THE RIGHT



PESTALOZZI'S WING OF THE CONVENT—STANS

in front of the shops as in Bern or Bozen, good public buildings, and a beautiful view from the castle. Here Pestalozzi made a brilliant success with the two dozen children in the lowest grade whom his friends got him a chance to teach. He did not get along so well with the higher class to which he was promoted, perhaps because he was not so well fitted to deal with it—perhaps because he was thinking too much of universal principles. Finally, he joined forces in the castle with Kruesi and the poor children whom the fortunes of war had driven out of Appenzell. For what good is a castle nowadays, unless it can be turned into a school or a museum or a lunatic asylum? This, at any rate, was the beginning of the "Institute," and in the court of the castle the tourist can find Pestalozzi's portrait in relief on a commemorative tablet. But successful as the Institute was, it lasted scarcely three years; for in those days of war and revolution the central government broke up, and the cantonal authorities required the castle for their own purposes. Then came the short stay at Münchenbuchsee, and after that the more famous Institute at Yverdon, to which his wonderful genius, and the self-sacrificing labors of Kruesi and his other assistants, attracted children from all over Europe to be taught, and teachers to learn his methods. For Pestalozzi was no longer confining himself to work with the poor, as he did at Neuhof and at Stans; he was trying to "psychologize education" everywhere, and had for the moment the attention of Europe; so much so that Queen Luise declared she wanted to drive to Switzerland to see him; the Prussian government actually sent seventeen young men for a three-year course under him; and some years later, when things were not doing so well, and the Institute was actually degraded in the eyes of his fellow-townsmen, his name and word were still able to prevent the Austrians from turning the castle and other public buildings of the place into a military hospital, and the emperor himself treated him with marked consideration. But more important than all this, it was here at Yverdon that Froebel and Karl Ritter and von Raumer, the historian of education, got their inspiration. Ritter wrote:

I have seen more than the paradise of Switzerland, for I have seen

Pestalozzi, and recognized how great his heart is, and how great his genius; never have I been so filled with a sense of the sacredness of my vocation and the dignity of human nature as in the days I spent with this noble man. . . . Pestalozzi knew less geography than a child in one of our primary schools, yet it was from him that I gained my chief knowledge of this science; for it was in listening to him that I first conceived the idea of the natural method. It was he who opened the way to me, and I take pleasure in attributing whatever value my work may have entirely to him.¹

To be sure, the Institute was disgraced. Its very success was its undoing; for the "family" grew too large and heterogeneous to be governed merely by the love and tact of the "father," and things went from good to bad, and from bad to worse, until Pestalozzi was compelled to turn over the management to one Schmid, who was strong in "government," but who turned everything to gall and bitterness for his colleagues, drove away the faithful men who had had a common purse, and asked nothing for their work but food and clothes, and then finally proved himself to be a rascal and was expelled by the **magistrates**.

Here, then, Pestalozzi lived for twenty years, reached his highest success, lost in death his faithful wife, and met with his bitterest defeat, when the very foundations of everything were removed; for, as he said one New Year's Day, standing beside an empty coffin he had had carried in: "This work was founded by love, but love has disappeared from our midst."

If we visit the scene of this twenty years' work, the scene on which the drama of Pestalozzi's life was practically finished, we find Yverdon a quaint and interesting town only a dozen miles north of Lausanne; and the old castle is easily the most conspicuous thing about it. At the castle a sign at the head of a slight, wooden staircase says to ring for the *concierge*, and the ring is answered by a little old woman in spectacles, who tells you that the "infants"—for here everything is French—are at school; but if you return after four, you may come in.

So you have a chance to walk about and see what a magnificent and well-preserved old castle it is, with the dry moat faced with stone and the four great towers at the corners; a castle whose

¹ Quoted from Quick's *Educational Reformers*.

grim dignity could not be much impaired by the concrete bridge across the moat, the bottling business in the cellar, or the insult built against one wall. And there, facing it from the center of the square, was another beautiful monument to Pestalozzi.

At four the children pour out; the boys in long, loose, butcher-like blue blouses and knickerbockers, with their short stockings hanging down around the tops of their shoes; and the girls to match. Then we go in, and the old lady starts for her keys; but if you catch a glimpse of the room where she keeps them, you cannot help following her. It is a round room in one of the towers; the walls are eight feet thick, but the narrow slits from the windows run in on the bias, and so they seem even thicker. It is evidently her kitchen, and she has set a good-sized iron range right into the immense old fireplace. Then she tells you that it was Pestalozzi's kitchen too, and starts with you through the building.

The cobble-stoned court was once Pestalozzi's garden, and, see, there are remnants of a gallery that once went all around it. These beautiful old chapel windows had been walled up, and were discovered only last year when the walls were scraped. Here are some wonderful old door-latches. In this room Madame Pestalozzi had taught the young girls to work. In that room they had had school, and this upper room with the old porcelain stove had been his and her bedroom. She died in the one beside it and is buried in the cemetery not far away.

Our visit was not without its providential uses, for as the old lady unlocked the door of the old schoolroom, a small boy who had been most securely 'kept in' had a chance to slip out, and the old lady let him go.

If you ask to see some of the other rooms, where the children are taught now, you will find them interesting. There are new windows cut through beside the old loopholes, but on this day at least they had not been used very effectively for ventilation. The desks and benches are innocent of varnish; and the walls are decorated with family trees (nice real trees, too) showing the lineage of the Swiss confederation, with chromos of battles and scenes from Tell, and large printed sheets in which *mon enfant* is

exhorted by the cantonal authorities to observe exactly thirty different rules. The poverty-stricken appearance of both children and rooms was very marked. Of course, it is far from being the abject poverty that Pestalozzi had to struggle with at Neuhof and at Stans; but frills are conspicuously absent, and the public schools of our American cities are models of elegance and luxury compared with this successor of the old Institute in the castle.

The monument outside can be seen from the windows of the room in which Madame Pestalozzi taught the young girls to work. It was erected in 1890 by popular subscription, and it has one advantage over that at Zurich—there is a girl as well as a boy. They cling to the teacher's legs, and both look up in his face. On the base of the monument one may read at one side a résumé of Pestalozzi's life, and on the other the words that give it a meaning: "*J'ai vécu moi-même comme un mendiant pour apprendre à mendiants à vivre comme des hommes.*"